

# AccessLetter

**Cambridge Commission for  
Persons with Disabilities**

## Michael Warshawsky, 52, Strong Disability Advocate Will Be Missed

Dedicated disability rights activist Mike Warshawsky died in November of heart failure, following complications from a lengthy illness. Since 2003, Mike served as a member of the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

Back in 1972, between his freshman and sophomore years at college, Mike sustained a spinal cord injury that resulted in quadriplegia. He subsequently used a motorized wheelchair for mobility. At the time of his injury, according to Mike's brother Bruce, "laws protecting the disabled were still far away, but Mike had a personal need to access public buildings, streets and accommodations, so he fought for them, not on a large scale, but where he could personally break down barriers, a philosophy he carried through until the day he died."

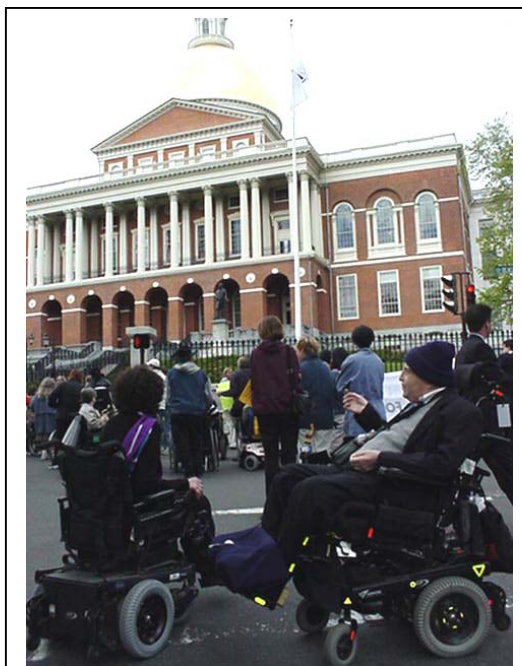
Mike's first advocacy efforts revolved around making the Tufts University campus more accessible to wheelchair users, and securing funding from the state vocational rehabilitation agency so he could complete his college training. Eventually Mike earned bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering and became an engineer at Raytheon Corporation. His career at Raytheon spanned 30 years, and included work on the Patriot Missile system, which gained notoriety during the 1991 war against Iraq.

Mike was a strong believer in grassroots advocacy. A 10-year resident of Andover, Mike was a catalyst in establishing the Andover Commission on Disability. According to Bruce Warshawsky, "Mike refused to take 'no' for an answer to anything." Mike quickly

gained a reputation among municipal officials and business owners, not just as an advocate to be reckoned with, but one they could rely on to be forthright and honest. "Businesses would go the extra mile because of the way Michael would work with them," said Andover town manager Reginald "Buzz" Stapczynski.

In addition to his activism at the municipal level, Mike also advocated for accessibility improvements to the MBTA and worked with the National Spinal Cord Injury Association to increase opportunities for people with spinal paralysis. Bruce Warshawsky urges everyone who knew Mike to "help to improve access for people with disabilities,

no matter how small; by doing so, you will ensure that while Mike's direct involvement with his life's work is now at an end, his dream and his life's work is not over."



**Mike Warshawsky (right) at  
State House rally in 2003**

## Commission Celebrates 25th Anniversary with Memorable Words by Robert Reich

A quarter of a century was wrapped up in a gala event on the evening of November 17, 2004 as the Commission for Persons with Disabilities celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Music by a Tunefoolery Concert Ensembles jazz pianist greeted guests as they arrived and visited around the buffet table. Words of welcome by Ben Harris, Chair of the Commission,

and City officials were followed by the recognition of several honored guests. Mary Ellen Preusser who was on the City Council and Chair of the Human Services Committee back in 1979 was recognized for her work at that time with the Disability Task Force and her role in introducing the Ordinance that established the “Cambridge Commission on the Handicapped.”

Gail Enman, who served as Director of the Commission from 1981 to 1994, and Michael Muehe, who has been the Executive Director and ADA Coordinator for the last ten years were honored for their outstanding advocacy work. Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for Human Service Programs, remarked on their critical roles in forming the bridges that link the needs and concerns of people with disabilities to the programs and policies of the City. Carolyn Thompson gave a quick overview of the Commission’s history in light of the broader disability rights movement during this period, and Commission member Dave Krebs captured much of the historical record in a PowerPoint presentation that was shown throughout the evening.



**Mary Ellen Preusser thanks audience as former CCPD Chair Paul Schlaver looks on**

Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor under President Clinton, drew resounding applause for his words about the importance of work in everyone’s life. He said, “There is no better social policy for people with disabilities than a good job.” Reich said that we all need something to do to feel we are making a contribution, that everybody who wants and needs a job should be able to get one, and that anybody who has a job should be making enough to support themselves. He said that people need not just

a minimum wage, but a “decent wage, a living wage... there should be no working poor.” Ben Harris recalled that Reich also “emphasized the importance of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as a wage subsidy for anyone in a low income category.”



**Robert Reich addresses Gala crowd**

Reich talked how this country really does have two political parties but they are not the traditional red and blue parties that come to mind. One is the party of self-centered individualism where each person is focused on achieving as much as he can for himself with little regard for those around him. The other “party” is made up of people who have a sense of interdependence, of all working together for the common good. He said that in his travels around the country, visiting with businesses and talking to people, he found that the businesses and communities where there was concern for each other were actually doing better financially than the ones that were just focused on getting ahead by whatever means possible.

The finale of the evening was a Mixed Abilities Movement and Dance demonstration led by Erica Sigal where everyone was invited to join in. In summary, quite a few people have commented since this gala event about how informative and important it was to look back over the past 25 years and remember all that has happened in the area of disability rights and access and the important roles played by numerous individuals.

## Inclusive Out of School Time Programs Get a Boost

For many years, programs within the City of Cambridge Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP) have served individual children with disabilities alongside nondisabled children. However, with urging from the Commission for Persons with Disabilities, DHSP staff have been striving in recent years to include more children with disabilities, particularly severely disabled children who need more one-on-one attention.

In 2002, Parents United for Child Care awarded a Lead to Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities (LOYD) grant to DHSP. Through the grant, programs within the Department examined and further developed their capacities to serve children with disabilities in an inclusionary way. Focused staff training and a series of successful inclusionary events were some of the products of that initiative.

In a natural evolution, in the summer of 2004 DHSP staff at all levels of the organization began meeting to focus on the ability of the Department as a whole to better serve all children in high quality Out of School Time programming. The goal of these efforts is to lay the groundwork for welcoming all children, with their individual strengths, needs, differences and similarities, to engage in after-school programs wherever they and their families choose to participate.

The vision encompasses broad inclusion into developmentally appropriate activities, creating opportunities for the full engagement of each child, including those with a spectrum of special needs. Inclusive programs integrate “children with disabilities into regular programs to the fullest extent consistent with a given child’s needs,” mirroring to a

high degree the approach of Cambridge Public Schools.

Working with a facilitator in the inclusionary programming field, the DHSP inclusion committee will remain flexible in its structure. At this time there are four task groups addressing various aspects of these preparations.



- One group will work with **parents** of both disabled and nondisabled children to prepare for this transition.
- Another group is concentrating on the needs of **staff** for training and coaching in order to effectively operate inclusive programs.
- A third group will work to coordinate with the **public schools** to serve all children better.
- The “**Big Picture**” group will help support and coordinate the work of the other groups. To this end, it is exploring resources which may be available through state agencies, private funders and local service providers, implementing a pilot program for individual children from the Special Needs Recreation program, and reaching out to link with the Cambridge Kids’ Council and its inclusion policy plan subcommittee, as well as other groups and community members.

As it develops, this initiative will offer support to non-municipal after-school programs through the sharing of staff training resources on inclusion, particularly through the Agenda for Children, the Community Partnership for Children, and the Zero to Eight Council. Also, outreach will be extended to those not currently served by DHSP after-school programs and to Cambridge families utilizing local non-public schools.

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## Winter Recreation Opportunities Abound

Winter is not only a time to cozy up by the fire with a good book or video. Get outdoors and enjoy the crisp air and bright landscape through accessible recreation opportunities! People with disabilities and their friends and families can participate in a variety of programs in supportive environments using adaptive equipment as needed. Activities vary depending on the site and the weather conditions; some have minimal fees, but many are free. These are sponsored by the Universal Access Program of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). For general information contact Marcy Marchello, Universal Access Program Coordinator at 413-545-5758 voice, 413-545-5995 fax or [Marcy.Marchello@state.ma.us](mailto:Marcy.Marchello@state.ma.us)

**Indoor Ice Skating** at the Brockton Rink: Instruction and support are provided by All Out Adventures as needed during public skating hours from 2-4 pm on the following Saturdays: January 8 & 22, February 5 & 19, and March 6. You can also use *ice sleds* on your own schedule. Call the John G. Asiaf, Memorial Skating Rink at 508-583-6804 for more information. There are minimal fees for admission and conventional skate rentals.

At Great Brook Farm State Park on Lowell Road in Carlisle there is ***cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and kick-sledding*** as weather and conditions permit. Hiking, and nature walks will take place in the event

of no snow. There are *dairy barn tours* on holiday Mondays - come meet the cows!

**Evening skiing** from 5-7 pm takes place on the groomed and lit Lantern Trail. Call 617-626-1294 for a recorded message to confirm the program status in the event of inclement weather. Conventional cross-country skis and limited number of snowshoes are also available for rental at Great Brook Ski Touring Center (978-369-7486). Pay trail fee to ski on groomed trails or have fun for free on un-groomed trails.

Saturdays, 11am-3pm, Jan. 8 and 29,  
Feb. 5 and 19

Mondays, 11am-3pm, Jan. 17 and Feb. 21  
Thursdays, 1pm-7pm, Jan. 20 and Feb. 10

At the Weston Ski Center, Leo J. Martin Memorial Golf Course in Weston you can join Venture Into Well-Being on two Sundays, Jan. 30 and Feb. 13 for ***cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and kick-sledding***. This is a new location for Universal Access near Boston

where snow is made for a 2-kilometer trail on moderate terrain. Call 617-626-1294 for a recorded message to confirm the program status in the event of inclement weather.



## Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

December 14 **Activist Summit and Holiday Party** sponsored by Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) at the Boston Public Library - Central Branch, 700 Boylston Street, Copley Square in the Mezzanine Conference Room. The Summit is 1-3 p.m. and the Party is 3-5 p.m. This is a time for advocates working with BCIL towards the common cause of disability rights to come together and talk about their work. The summit will focus on getting to know each other and the disability-related issues we are working on, and on shaping together the focus of the next year of advocacy efforts. Come with your ideas and enthusiasm, and bring a friend. For more information contact Helen Hendrickson, 617-338-6665 x233 voice or [hhendrickson@bostoncil.org](mailto:hhendrickson@bostoncil.org).

December 15 **Application DEADLINE for Summer 2005 Congressional and Information Technology Internships** in Washington, D.C. If you are a college student with a disability, spend next summer



gaining valuable work experience while earning a stipend. Eight *Congressional Interns* will spend 8 weeks learning about congressional office operations, public policy development and constituents' roles in the legislative/political process. Airfare, housing and a \$1500 stipend will be provided through the sponsorship of the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation. A similar program sponsored by Microsoft will provide for ten undergraduate *Information Technology Interns* interested in information technology careers the opportunity to work for a U.S. government agency for 11 weeks. Airfare, summer housing and a \$2500 will be provided. For either internship, apply through the American Association for People with Disabilities (AAPD) at [www.aapd-dc.org](http://www.aapd-dc.org) or 800-840-8844 (voice/TTY).

December 15 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT) holiday celebration**, 11:30 a.m. – 1p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 2; bring \$3 to cover refreshments. The full Committee meeting will be afterwards from 1-3:30 p.m. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or to request Interpreters. Due to security measures, please bring proper identification to gain entrance to all meetings.

December 15 **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, a peer support group for women with chronic illness or physical/ emotional disabilities meets from 2-3:30 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. in Cambridge. For more information contact Mary Quinn at 617-354-8807 or [woman@braintrust.org](mailto:woman@braintrust.org).

December 17 **Autism Parent Support Group in Arlington**, 9:30-11 a.m. at May Center for Early Childhood Education, 10 Acton St. Facilitator is Gail Kastorf <[gkastorf@nsarc.org](mailto:gkastorf@nsarc.org)>. For more information contact the ASC Autism Support Center at 978-777-9135, x204 or check their web page at [www2.shore.net/~nsarc/](http://www2.shore.net/~nsarc/)

December 21 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston.

January 5 **RSI (repetitive strain injury) Monthly Drop-in Group** (no registration is necessary) on first Wednesday of each month, 6-8 p.m. in the 2nd floor library at the Brookline Public Health Center at 11 Pierce Street. RSI Action volunteers answer questions and provide resources and support, including the opportunity to view our provider evaluation book. Location may change in near future so check web site at [www.rsiaction.org/](http://www.rsiaction.org/) or phone message at 617-247-6827 for details. For more information, email [cnot@rsiaction.org](mailto:cnot@rsiaction.org) and include your phone number so you can be informed of any last-minute changes to the date or location.

January 11 **Questions and Answers with Attorney from Mass. Advocates for Children**, 7-9 p.m. at Autism Support Center, 6 Southside Road in Danvers. To register, call Stephanie Gammons, 978-777-9135, x211 or email at [sgammons@nsarc.org](mailto:sgammons@nsarc.org).

January 11 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. Meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Room 143. There is often a guest speaker. Go to their website at [harvee.billerica.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/boston-voice-users](http://harvee.billerica.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/boston-voice-users) and click on Boston-voice-users Archives to find out more about meetings and discussions.

January 18 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston.

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- January 15: **K'sharim: Connecting People With Disabilities to Jewish Life Havdalah Happening** at Temple Emunah (781-861-0300), 9 Piper Road in Lexington from 6-8 p.m. will include dinner and program. K'sharim (Hebrew for "connections") is an innovative undertaking by Boston's Jewish community designed to involve people with disabilities in all facets of Jewish life. K'sharim is for teens and adults with disabilities, their families and caregivers as well as for the host synagogue communities. Newcomers are always welcome to all K'sharim activities. For more information about K'sharim and its programs contact: Jan Golner, coordinator of Friend 2 Friend of the Jewish Big Brother and Big Sister Association at 617-558-6548, e-mail: [jan@jbbbs.org](mailto:jan@jbbbs.org) or Judy Pearl, Director of Special Needs Services for the JCCs of Greater Boston, 617-558-6508, or [jpearl@jccgb.org](mailto:jpearl@jccgb.org).
- January 20 **LD/ADHD Task Force** for persons with Learning Disabilities / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is sponsored by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and is now meeting at MRC State headquarters, 27-48 Wormwood Street in Boston (south of Fort Point Channel) in the 6th floor large conference room. Business meeting at 11 a.m. and Support Group at 1 p.m. For more information contact Angelica Sawyer at 617-661-3117 (voice).
- January 26 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets from 1-3:30 p.m. (on the 3rd Wednesday this month.) at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 4. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information, to request Interpreters, or confirm date and time of meeting.
- February 4-5 **Partnering for Success: The Journey to Adulthood**, a two-day Conference intended for families of students ages 17 and older. A Resource Fair is planned with lots of social, recreational, and vocational options for students transitioning to adulthood. This training is designed to help individuals and their families identify elements essential to a fulfilling future. Attendees will work through several categories to address different aspects of a full life and leave with a blueprint necessary for a successful journey into adulthood. For more information contact Susan Nadworny, Mass Families Organizing for Change, NE Regional Coordinator, 16 Warwick Rd, Melrose, MA 02176; phone 781-665-5179 or e-mail [snadw@aol.com](mailto:snadw@aol.com).
- February 8 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. Meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. (See January 4 listing for details.)
- February 9 **RSI Monthly Drop-in Group** (see January 5 listing for details.)

## Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations. Examples of our ongoing work include:

- Work with various City departments to ensure **compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990** (ADA) and related state and federal disability rights laws;
- Provide free **disability awareness training** upon request for any Cambridge business or nonprofit entity;
- Issue **temporary disability parking permits** to Cambridge residents;
- Cosponsor the **taxi discount coupon program** with the Cambridge Council on Aging; and
- Facilitate additional **accessible parking spaces** through the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

**Access Notice:** The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

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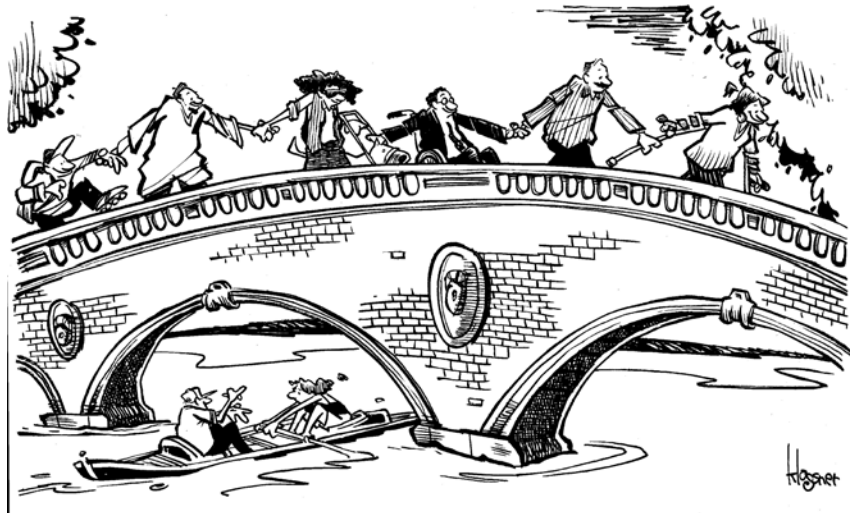
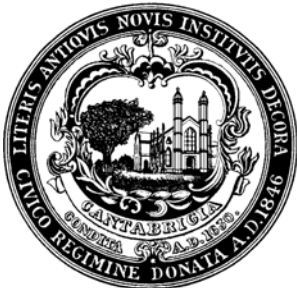
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Access**Letter** is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities,  
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**Read past issues on our website: [www.cambridgema.gov/~CCPD](http://www.cambridgema.gov/~CCPD)**

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